

Everest: tourism and climate change provide new challenges

Level 3 • Advanced

1 Key words

Fill the gaps in the sentences using these key words from the text.

stunning
trekker

booming
coverage

intemperate
contaminated

stricken
glacier

soil erosion
landfill site

- _____ is the attention that the media give to a particular subject or the way that it is reported.
- If something is described as _____, it is extremely impressive.
- _____ language is unreasonable and shows a lack of control.
- If a person is _____, they are affected by serious problems such as illness or injury.
- A _____ is someone who travels a long distance over rough ground and on foot, often as a holiday.
- If a country, region or industry is _____, it is experiencing a period of economic success.
- A _____ is a very large mass of ice that moves very slowly.
- If a watercourse is _____, it has been made dirty, polluted or poisonous by the addition of a chemical, waste or infection.
- A _____ is a large hole in the ground where waste is buried.
- _____ is the process by which the surface of land is gradually damaged by water, wind etc and begins to disappear.

2 What do you know?

Decide whether these statements are true (T) or false (F). Then check your answers in the text.

- Everest was first climbed in 1853.
- Kenton Cool was the first man to reach the summit of Everest.
- It can cost climbers \$85,000 to climb Everest.
- Kathmandu is the capital of Nepal.
- The west ridge of Everest was first climbed in 1963.
- It is not possible to reach the summit of Everest in the hours of darkness.

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Ed Douglas

24 May, 2013

- 1 Unusually for someone who likes to chat, Kenton Cool can barely speak. Exerting himself at high altitude has left his voice a throaty growl. He is now in Kathmandu, the capital of Nepal, having flown down from Everest base camp that morning. Cool is reflecting on a startling sequence of climbs completed over the course of the previous weekend. Early on Saturday morning, he reached the summit of Nuptse, the first and lowest of the three main summits in the Everest "horseshoe" that surrounds the glaciated valley called the Western Cwm.
- 2 That same day, he climbed up to the summit of Everest itself, reaching the top in complete darkness early on Sunday. He and his climbing partner then continued on to the summit of Lhotse, the third of this spectacular three-peaks challenge, on Monday morning.
- 3 "It was a snatched opportunity," he says. "For the first time since the late 1990s, there were fixed ropes on all three mountains. That doesn't take away the physical achievement of what I did. I've set the bar at a certain level. But whoever comes along next will move the bar further and do it without ropes or bottled oxygen."
- 4 Sixty years after Everest was first climbed, much of the coverage is looking back to Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay and their age of innocence from the modern era of commercialism and environmental degradation. I've asked Cool to look forward and imagine what top climbers might be doing 60 years from now.
- 5 "I hate to think," he says, but mentions the Swiss climber, Ueli Steck, who fled the mountain in April following what Cool terms "an altercation" with a crowd of Sherpas at Camp 2. Steck, he says, was planning to climb Everest's west ridge, first done in 1963, descend to the South Col and then immediately climb Lhotse via a new route, all without fixed ropes. "Ueli had been training like a machine," Cool says. "He's a climber in a class all his own. He's technically brilliant but he had also taken his physical condition to an astronomic level. It would have been amazing to see what he could have done."
- 6 What tourism will look like is another matter. One clue is in the stunning helicopter rescue performed by Simone Moro, Steck's climbing partner, whose intemperate language provoked the confrontation at Camp 2. Moro flew back to Everest on Tuesday at the controls of a high-powered helicopter to rescue a stricken climber at an altitude of 7,800 metres.
- 7 It was the highest rescue yet performed on Everest and highlights the exponential rise in helicopter flights in recent years. By 2073, the infrastructure on the mountain could include a helipad on the South Col, bringing tourists breathing bottled oxygen. In the meantime, they are transforming the potential for rescuing both climbers and the far more numerous trekkers heading as far as base camp.
- 8 Whether the Everest region can continue to cope with a booming tourism sector remains to be seen, according to mountain geographer and environmentalist, Alton Byers. The combination of climate change and tourism, he says, is creating new stresses on the Sherpa homeland. The retreat, and in some cases disappearance, of glaciers in the Everest region are having a major impact already. "Everywhere you go, people are talking about how there's less water. There's less water for agriculture and less water for all the new lodges that are getting built."
- 9 In the Sherpa town of Namche Bazaar, he says, a new five-mile pipeline is being laid to bring water to service the growing tourist demand for showers and flush toilets. The local stream has become contaminated with human waste and does not provide enough water for a place that, in high season, is bursting at the seams. "Every village is digging a pit just beyond the houses for garbage. Khumbu has the highest landfill sites in the world," he says. Human waste at base camp is now managed well and removed in plastic barrels. But, according to Byers, these barrels are emptied into a huge pit a few hours down the valley that could leak into the region's watercourses.
- 10 "These problems can be solved, but we need to get serious about it," he says. "One climber can spend \$85,000 climbing Everest. And that's fine. But at some point we're going to have to address these other priorities. For half a million dollars a year, you could solve most of them."

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- 11 Climate change is another matter. Byers works with local conservation committees to identify and plan for the impacts of climate change, most usually finding new water sources or introducing rainwater harvesting. The rapid build-up of glacial lakes that threaten to burst and flood the Sherpa homeland is a constant threat. "There's going to come a time when people are going to have to get out of their way."
- 12 Changing weather patterns are also having an impact on tourism. Increased cloud cover in periods of normally clear weather is closing Lukla Airport, the gateway to the Everest region, more often. A new road for 4x4s is being built to Lukla to guarantee the flow of tourists and their money, but Byers is concerned that the rapid spread of the road network in Nepal is being done on the cheap, with disastrous consequences in terms of soil erosion and landslides.
- 13 "Everest is the icon everyone knows," he says. "It's the canary in the coalmine that everyone understands. It's the perfect laboratory for figuring out how to address some of these problems, like the impacts of climate change and tourism."

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3 Comprehension check

Choose the best answer according to the text.

1. What is causing new stresses on the Everest region?
 - a. the disappearance of glaciers
 - b. a combination of climate change and tourism
 - c. human waste
2. Why are glacial lakes described as "a constant threat"?
 - a. because they obstruct climbers on their way to the summit of Everest
 - b. because the water in them has become contaminated
 - c. because they could burst and flood the surrounding area
3. Why is the rapid spread of the road network in Nepal a cause for concern?
 - a. because it could lead to soil erosion and landslides
 - b. because it could lead to the closure of Lukla Airport
 - c. because it will bring even more tourists to the region
4. How does the present situation on Everest differ from the 1950s?
 - a. climbers no longer need ropes and oxygen
 - b. Everest is now much more commercialized and the environment has been damaged
 - c. climbers can now fly directly to the helipad on the South Col

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4 Find the word

Find the following words and phrases in the text.

1. an adjective meaning *surprising or very unusual* (para 1)
2. a three-word expression meaning *a brief period that you have taken advantage of in order to achieve something* (para 3)
3. a three-word expression meaning *establish the standard that others need to beat* (para 3)
4. a noun meaning *a noisy argument* (para 5)
5. an adjective meaning *increasing or growing very fast* (para 7)
6. a four-word expression meaning *very full of people or things* (para 9)
7. a five word expression meaning *something that serves as a warning* (para 13)
8. a two-word phrasal verb meaning *be able to understand something or solve a problem* (para 13)

5 Compound nouns

Match the words in the left-hand column with those in the right-hand column to make compound nouns from the text.

- | | |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. pipe | a. shoe |
| 2. home | b. slide |
| 3. horse | c. way |
| 4. water | d. land |
| 5. gate | e. line |
| 6. land | f. course |

6 Word-building

Complete the sentences using the correct form of the word in brackets at the end of each sentence.

1. Kenton Cool's climb was a remarkable physical _____. [ACHIEVE]
2. Alan Byers is a mountain geographer and _____. [ENVIRONMENT]
3. Building cheap roads could have _____ consequences. [DISASTER]
4. Ueli Steck's physical condition had reached an _____ level. [ASTRONOMY]
5. Conservationists are introducing rainwater _____. [HARVEST]
6. The Western Cwm is a _____ valley. [GLACIATE]

7 Discussion

Should the number of people climbing Everest be limited? Why? Why not?

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KEY

1 Key words

1. coverage
2. stunning
3. intemperate
4. stricken
5. trekker
6. booming
7. glacier
8. contaminated
9. landfill site
10. soil erosion

2 What do you know?

1. F
2. F
3. T
4. T
5. T
6. F

3 Comprehension check

1. b
2. c
3. a
4. b

4 Find the word

1. startling
2. a snatched opportunity
3. set the bar
4. altercation
5. exponential
6. bursting at the seams
7. the canary in the coalmine
8. figure out

5 Compound nouns

1. e
2. d
3. a
4. f
5. c
6. b

6 Word-building

1. achievement
2. environmentalist
3. disastrous
4. astronomic; astronomical
5. harvesting
6. glaciated